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Germany

Poultry and Products

AI among wild birds reaches German mainland 2006

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Report Highlights:

The total number of birds tested positive for Aivian Influenza (AI) of the type H5N1 increased to 103. Two of the birds were found on the shores of German mainland, while 101 animals were found on the island of Ruegen.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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The number of wild bird that tested positive for Avian Influenza (AI) H5N1 virus increased to 103, as of noon¹, February 21, 2006. While 101 of these birds were found on the Island of Ruegen, two birds (a buzzard and a seagull) were found on the shore of the mainland. Protection and surveillance zones were established immediately. In addition, the affected state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania declared all counties along the shore of the Baltic Sea as surveillance zones²³.

Meanwhile the local county chief Kerstin Kassner faces increasing criticism for her initial crisis management. While an elaborate crisis plan for the State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania existed, the implementation on the local level fell short of expectations. Specifically the recovery of dead wild birds and closing off of affected areas is said to have taken too long. However, when judging this criticism one has to bear in mind that the next state election in Mecklenburg Western Pomerania is scheduled for September 2006, and all parties want to demonstrate their competence in crisis management.

In Germany, the veterinary authorities in the affected counties are in charge when it comes to animal disease outbreaks. The Federal Ministry can advise but not order any measures or approaches. It is only if and when the county chief asks for help, that Federal authorities may take action. A discussion has begun on whether the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection (BMELV) should be able to assume charge in the event of a crisis, without the consent of the local authorities.

In the meantime, the county chiefs of Ruegen, East Western Pomerania, and North Western Pomerania have declared a state of emergency, and asked the army (*Bundeswehr*) for assistance. 300 soldiers are currently helping in the collection of dead animals as well as with disinfecting cars that travel to and from the island of Ruegen. Together with veterinary officers, firefighters, the Federal Police, and the German Disaster Relief Organization (*Technisches Hilfswerk, THW*) this adds to more than 530 people that are active in combating the spread of AI among wild birds and to prevent the spread to domestic flocks, in the county of Ruegen alone.

As a precautionary measure 2,865 chicken and ducks from one farm and nine small holdings were killed and destroyed because these birds had been kept free-range close to where the first dead birds had been found, and were feared to have come in contact with droppings from the infected wild birds.

¹ Middle European Standard Time

² For details on the measures entailed by the protection and/or the surveillance zone please refer to our report GM6005.

³ For a current map of the incidences as well as of protection and surveillance zones visit www.mv-regierung.de, click on "Aktuelle Infos zur Vogelgrippe", click into the map to get an enlarged version.